**Final Discussion – *The Scarlet Letter***

**On Monday, November 13th, we will have our final discussion on *The Scarlet Letter*. This will be a graded discussion during which your active and productive participation is expected. To facilitate this discussion, prepare responses to some of the questions below.**

**While you do not need to specifically write out your full response, you may find it helpful to note quotes, specific examples, reasoning for your answers. If you are absent on the day of this discussion you will receive an alternative assignment.**

1. Hawthorne came from a long line of Puritans, and Puritan beliefs about subjects like guilt, repression, original sin, and discipline inform the book on every level. What is your view of how the Puritan worldview is treated by Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*?"

2. Some assert that Hester Prynne can be seen as the first great modern heroine in American literature. Do you agree?

3. Which characters, if any, have your sympathy as the novel progresses? Do your views change or develop as you read? Explain.

4. The highly charged symbolism of *The Scarlet Letter* is one of its most distinctive features. Discuss the central symbol of the story—the scarlet letter itself. What does it signify? How does it function in the novel? How does its meaning change over time?

5. Critics have sometimes disagreed about whether Hawthorne condones or condemns the adultery of Hester and Dimmesdale in the novel. Can either view be supported? Which do you feel is the case?

6. Discuss the main characters of the novel. What do each of them represent in terms of the larger themes explored by the book?

7. The final scaffold scene brings the various themes, characters, and plotlines woven throughout the novel to a powerful conclusion. Describe your response to this scene, and to the disputed event that occurs near its end.

8. Come up with your own question to ask the class. Be sure to note your own thoughts on the text as well.

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